

Amendments to the Drawings:

The attached sheets of drawings include changes to Figs 1, 2 and 3. These sheets, which include Figs. 1, 2, and 3, replace the original sheets including Figs. 1-3. In Figure 1, reference numbers **152** and **154** that pointed to seams have been deleted. In addition the reference number **114** has been redrawn inside the inflated portion within seam **112**. Similarly in Fig. 3, the reference number **114** has been redrawn to be within seam **112**. Fig. 2 has been amended to show barrier sheet **106** and the second embodiment sheet **106'**. It is respectfully submitted that this subject matter was disclosed in the original specification, including the claims, and thus does not constitute new matter.

Attachment:

Replacement Sheets

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Summary of the Examiner's Actions

The Examiner has indicated that Claims 13 and 15 are allowable. Such favorable treatment of these claims is greatly appreciated. Further, the Examiner has objected to claims 17-20 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim and has indicated that the claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Objection to the Drawings

The Examiner's objection to the drawings is noted. With regard to the extraneous reference numbers **152** and **154** designating seams, these references have been deleted from the figures. In addition, an amendment has been made to the drawings such that the reference number **114** appears within seam **112**. Further, FIG. 2 has been amended to illustrate the continuous barrier sheet of claim 3, having a neck cutout and extending the entire length of the blanket. As stated above, in view of the disclosure of this feature in the specification and the claims, it is respectfully submitted that there is no new matter in the figure amendments.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph

The Examiner's rejection of Claims 1-12, 14 and 21 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter regarded as the invention is noted. With regard to Claims 1 and 7, the Examiner has stated that "through-opening" has insufficient antecedent basis because the specification describes this element as an "access opening." Accordingly, the Examiner requested amendments to claims 1 and 7 in which the phrase "through-opening" be replaced with the phrase "access opening."

It is respectfully submitted that one skilled in the art at the time the application was filed would recognize that a through-opening is a hole, which is the equivalent to the access opening discussed in the specification. As such, Applicants believe that no such amendment is required to the claims, and that any such amendment does not narrow the scope of the claims because an access opening is the same as a through-opening. For the sake of expediting the prosecution of this application, Applicant has

amended Claims 1 and 7 to replace the phrase through-opening with access opening. It is respectfully submitted that the requested amendment overcomes the Examiner's rejection of Claims 1 and 7, and that the Examiner's rejection of Claims 1 and 7 has been traversed. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw this rejection of Claims 1 and 7.

With regard to claims 2, 12 and 14, the Examiner has suggested that the word "sterilized" be replaced with "sterilizable". A clarifying amendment has been requested, and it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's rejection of claims 2, 12 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph has likewise been traversed. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw this rejection of Claims 2, 12 and 14.

With regard to the rejection of Claims 21 and 23, which recite a "means for sterilization", these claims have been cancelled, without prejudice.

The Examiner indicated that Claims 2-12, 14, 21 and 23 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph and to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. There being no other objection to Claim 1, it is respectfully submitted that Claim 1, as amended to overcome the §112, second paragraph rejection, is now allowable. Claims 2-6 depend from Claim 1, a claim deemed to be allowable. Accordingly, Claims 2-6 are also deemed to be allowable. Claim 7 has been amended to overcome the §112 rejection. Accordingly, Claim 7 is deemed to be allowable. Claims 8-12 depend from Claim 7, a claim deemed to be allowable. Accordingly, Claims 8-12 are also deemed to be allowable. Claim 14 has been amended to overcome the §112 rejection and it depends from an allowed claim. Thus, Claim 14 is now deemed to be allowable.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Addressing the Examiner's rejection of Claims 16, 22, and 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), Applicant respectfully suggests that Namanye does not anticipate the claims of the present invention. The Examiner indicated that Claims 17-20 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

In order to expedite the prosecution of this application, Applicant has chosen to rewrite the claims rather than argue the novelty of the claims over the cited art. Accordingly, Claim 16, 22, and 24 have been cancelled, without prejudice. Further, Claims 18 and 19 have been amended to include all the limitations of Claim 16. Claims 18 and 19 have the same scope as the claims had in the original application. Claims 17 and 20 have been amended to depend from Claim 18.

It is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's objections to Claims 17-20 have been addressed by the amendments and have been traversed. Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to withdraw the rejection to these claims.

Objections to the Claims

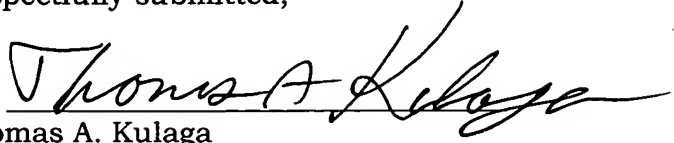
It is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's objections to the claims have been addressed in the discussion above and have been traversed.

Summary

In view of the amendment of independent Claims 1 and 7, the amendment of Claims 2, 12, 14, and 17-20, the cancellation of Claims 16 and 21-24, without prejudice, and the arguments presented herein, it is believed that the above-identified patent application is in a condition for the issuance of a Notice of Allowance. Such action by the Examiner is respectfully requested. If, however, the Examiner is of the opinion that any of the drawings or other portions of the application are still not allowable, it will be appreciated if the Examiner will telephone the undersigned to expedite the prosecution of the application.

Please charge any additional fees associated with this communication, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 16-1910 (29437.00).

Respectfully submitted,

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